

## Towards gender mainstreaming trade unions in Japan and Germany: the impact of expanding part-time employment in the 1990s

Yuki, Masako; Yamada, Kazuyo

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Masako Yuki, Kazuyo Yamada\*

## **Towards Gender Mainstreaming Trade Unions in Japan and Germany: The impact of expanding part-time employment in the 1990s\*\***

In many industrialized countries, employment types have increasingly diversified due to a rise in the number of irregular workers, including part-timers and dispatched workers, along with the feminization of employment. Particularly since the 1990s, trade unions have been urged to take necessary measures for this diversification. This paper aims to analyze the transition of trade unions' employment policies and their organizational structure from gender perspectives, focusing on the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) in Japan and German Trade Union Federation (DGB) in Germany, and examines the issues of labour movements and their new possibilities. Specifically, considering the differences in the framework of industrial relations in Japan and Germany, the paper analyzes the policies on unionization and equal treatment after the 1990s. On the basis of this analysis, the paper points out that the future of labour movements in Japan and Germany can be sought in further promotion of gender policies, the realization of equal treatment, re-evaluation of the concept of „labour,” and the implementation of collective agreements stipulating all these.

### **„Gender Mainstreaming“ in den Gewerkschaften Japans und Deutschlands. Der Einfluss von Teilzeit- Beschäftigung in den 1990er Jahren**

In vielen Industriegesellschaften haben sich die Beschäftigungsformen zunehmend diversifiziert durch eine anwachsende Zahl atypischer Beschäftigungsformen, die sowohl Teilzeitarbeit wie Leiharbeit einschließen und mit einer Feminisierung des Beschäftigungssystems einhergehen. Insbesondere seit den 1990er Jahren sehen sich die Gewerkschaften genötigt, auf diesen Wandel zu reagieren. Ansatzpunkt dieses Beitrags sind die aus der *Gender*-Perspektive wahrgenommenen Veränderungen in der Arbeitsmarktpolitik und den Organisationsstrukturen gewerkschaftlicher Dachverbände in Japan (Rengo) und Deutschland (DGB). Vor dem Hintergrund der verschiedenartigen Systeme industrieller Beziehungen werden die Rekrutierungs- und Gleichbehandlungspolitik beider Gewerkschaftsbünde seit den 1990er Jahren untersucht. Auf der Grundlage dieser Analyse argumentiert der Beitrag, dass die Zukunft der Gewerkschaftsbewegung beider Länder in der Förderung von Gender-Politik, der Verwirklichung der Gleichstellung und der Neuevaluierung des Konzepts der „Arbeit“ sowie der Vereinbarung von Tarifverträgen, mit denen diese Maßnahmen implementiert werden, zu suchen ist.

**Key words:** Gender, trade unions, part-time employment, Japan, Germany

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\* Assistant Prof. Masako Yuki, Ph.D. in Social Studies, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Kawamura Gakuen Woman's University, 1133 Sageto, Abiko-shi, Chiba 270-1138, Japan. E-Mail: M.Yuki@kgwu.ac.jp.

Associate Prof. Kazuyo Yamada, Faculty of Economics, Shiga University, 1-1-1, Banba Hikone-city, Shiga, 522-8522, Japan. E-Mail: yamada@biwako.shiga-u.ac.jp.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper uses a gender perspective to examine trends and issues for trade unions that are arising because of the expansion of part-time employment in Japan and Germany in the 1990s. Specifically, the paper analyzes the transition of trade union employment policies regarding part-time labour in the 1990s, focusing on the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo-JTUC) in Japan and the German Trade Union Federation (DGB) in Germany.

As a source of analysis, this study mainly draws on the „Rengo White Paper,” „Data on Women’s Activities,” and „A Handbook on Women’s Activities” for the case of Japan, the „DGB Activity Report” and „DGB Women’s Department Activity Report” for Germany.

The paper focuses on the 1990s because it marked a major turning point for labour unions in both Japan and Germany. In Japan, Rengo was inaugurated in 1989 after the dissolution and reunification of national centers, while in Germany, the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions (FDGB) in former East Germany was dissolved due to the reunification of Germany in 1990 and was incorporated into national centers affiliated to DGB.

The characteristics of industrial relations in Japan and Germany can be briefly summarized as follows. Japan's trade unions are three-tiered, composed of enterprise-based unions, industrial unions, and national centers at the top of the hierarchy. Under this system, workers join enterprise-based unions, which in turn join industrial unions. Collective bargaining is conducted enterprise-wise and industry-wise. Since the membership of enterprise-based unions is limited to regular workers (Ujihara 1980; Shirai 1996; Broadbent 2003), part-timers join individual-based trade unions. Currently, in service industries, small-sized companies, and cottage industries, where part-timers prevail, relatively few regular workers are unionized, which makes it even more difficult for part-timers to participate in trade unions.

On the other hand, the German industrial relations is known for its „dual system“. On the industry level, trade unions that are organized outside enterprises reach collective agreements through collective bargaining with employers' associations. At the enterprise level, Work Councils have a co-determination right to conclude works agreements with employers (Müller-Jentsch 1997). Workers voluntarily join trade unions organized by industry (Nishitani 1992). Consequently, unlike Japan's union shop system which is characterized by obligatory membership in enterprise-based unions, part-timers in Germany should be eligible to join trade unions.

As in many other industrialized nations, in Japan and Germany, feminization of employment and the diversification of employment types are in progress. This is due to the increase of irregular workers, including part-timers and dispatched workers.

During the decade from 1991 to 2000, part-time employment as a proportion of total employment in Japan increased from 20.0% in 1991 to 23.1% in 2000. At the same time the ratio of women among part-time workers stayed high (around 70%). The number of female part-time workers among female employees rose from 34.3% to 39.4% (OECD 1993, 2002). Moreover, women's wage differentials between regular

work and part-time work widened from 100:72 in 1990 to 100:67 in 2000 (Pato Taimu Rodo Kenkyukai 2002), further increasing the demand for „equal treatment of part-time workers”. The disparity grew in part because while wages of part-time workers remained low, regular workers wages vary in response to personnel evaluations within companies („satei”) (Endo 1994).

In the labour movement, the unionization rate of part-time workers stands at a low 2.7%, in sharp contrast with 20.7% of the total workforce in 2001 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2001). Part of the reason is that Japanese enterprise unions limit union membership to regular workers.

In contrast to Japan, part-time employment as a proportion of total employment in Germany increased from 15.5% to 17.6% in the decade from 1991 to 2000. While the percentage of women among all part-timers remained high over 80%, the percentage of women part-time workers among all female employees decreased from 34.3% to 33.9% (OECD 1993, 2002). Part-time workers were not incorporated into the German institutionalized industrial relations system when it was first developed. They were neither entitled to the benefits of collective bargaining agreements. Similarly, trade unions had little interest in part-timers, because they are situated outside the so-called „typical employment relationship,” which is the mainstay of traditional trade unions (Klein 1995). As exemplified by the struggle for shorter working hours since the end of World War II, trade unions gave priority to the interests of male regular workers existing upon the assumption of sexual division of labour; therefore, they were not actively involved in the interests of female married part-time workers who supported those males (Yuki 2000).

Gender perspectives are now indispensable in constructing society and formulating policy, as indicated by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, „gender mainstreaming” initiatives within the EU, and the promulgation of the „Basic Law for Gender-Equal Society” in Japan in 1999.

While the system of industrial relations differs between Japan and Germany, both countries face a drop in the unionization rate of trade unions. This drop was triggered by the shift in the industrial structure from manufacturing to service sectors, the expansion of part-time employment, and the feminization of part-time work. This paper explores how the trade unions of the two countries should adopt „gender mainstreaming,” which is now the global trend, so as to overcome this common risk for their future.

## **2. Previous studies**

There is a fair number of previous studies on Japanese and German trade unions. Notably, in Europe and the U.S., trade union movements in the past have been critically examined extensively using „feminization and/or gendering of trade unions” as a key term (Briskin/McDermott 1993; Pocock 1997; Munro 1999; Colgan/Ledwith 2002).

In contrast to an enormous number of previous studies in Japan and Germany dealing with German trade unions, studies taking women's or gender perspectives are not often carried out. Among those studies of „trade unions and women” that have been carried out, several have been critical studies on male-centered trade unions, oth-

ers have focused on women's „special interests,“ and some highlight the relationship between trade unions and part-timers (Pinl 1977; Nassauer, 1989; Klein 1995). But analyses on the structure and policies of trade unions with gender perspectives have yet to be developed (Yuki 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Koch-Baumgarten 2002).

In Japan, although there have been a great number of works written on trade unions in postwar Japan, the positioning of women workers tended to fall outside the scope of analysis, with an exception of Gordon (1993), Nimura (1994), and Endo (1995), which take a look, if not full, at the positioning of women workers in post-war trade unions. As such, in the literature on trade unions, there are only a few in-depth analyses of the structure and policies of trade unions that take a gender approach (Yamada 1999; Yamada 2001; Broadbent 2003).

### **3. Japan's case**

Since the 1990s Japan had been unable to recover from the long-term economic depression called „the great depression of the Heisei era,“ as shown in a sharp rise in the country's unemployment rate. Over the course of time, certain employment laws have become deregulated, such as the Labour Standards Law, Worker Dispatching Law, and Equal Employment Opportunity Law. This deregulation is promoting job mobility and the expansion of irregular employment.

#### ***3.1 Demand for the formulation of part-time work law and minimum wage system***

On November 21, 1989 the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) was inaugurated (Shinoda 1997). In 2000, it comprised 7,173,000 members, incorporating 62.2% of all the union members in Japan (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2001; Takahashi 2001).

From its foundation, Rengo promoted the betterment of working conditions for part-time labour as one of their basic objectives. At the same time Rengo was addressing women's active participation in trade unions and the realization of gender-equal society (Rengo 1990: 169). The call for „the formulation of Part-time Work Law“ was strong. This was because part-time work was thought to be unstable employment with unfavorable working conditions. Another factor was that part-time workers were predominantly women (Rengo/W 1990: 1; Takanashi, A./Washio, E./Kato, T. (eds.) 1990: 179, 180, 220, 221). Rengo needed to overcome the instability and poor working conditions associated with part-time labour to pursue „the realization of a gender-equal society.“ From its formation Rengo had specified its work on employment policies as one of its primary activities.

According to its own report, Rengo's part-time employment policies originate from its basic principles on part-time employment. These were laid out in 1988 prior to its inauguration as a coalition of private and public sector unions (Rengo 1999: 128, 129). As pointed out by Rengo, its main themes were: 1. promotion of unionization, 2. improvement of wage and working conditions, and 3. improvement of policies and systems through the formulation of Part-time Work Law (Rengo 1993: 91). Out of the three, the demand for the formulation of Part-time Work Law was deemed to be Rengo's immediate objective. The Part-time Work Law came into force as early as in

1993. Rengo's women's department played a role in the formulation of the Part-time Work Law as well as endeavoring to upgrade working conditions (Rengo/W 1990: 14-18).

Rengo's part-time employment policies give a high priority to raising minimum wages (Rengo 1992: 128-132). Part-time wages are not determined by the in-company wage system as they are for regular workers, but the wages for part-time employees are said to be subject to regional wage rates. A Rengo White Paper in 1996 aimed at increasing minimum wages as one of its measures for eliminating part-time workers' wage problems. It cited the research findings by Japan Institute of Workers' Evolution. These findings showed that more than 30% of businesses, especially small and large enterprises, took minimum wages into account when determining part-time workers' wages (Rengo 1996: 59).

Another notable action by Rengo is the proposal of „intra-firm minimum wages” (INMWs). Rengo presented to each of its components, (primarily unit labour unions, unit industrial unions, and local Rengos) a series of appropriate issues to be tackled. Rengo requested the first two component unions to „facilitate the conclusion of a contract on intra-firm minimum wages for all employees including temporary and part-time workers”; unions of major companies to „work to support the wage increase of those working at affiliated companies”; and local Rengos to „launch on ‘the campaign to abolish wages below X yen’ ” (Rengo 1996: 82). As of 2002, this demand for minimum wages is one of Rengo's priority issues. It is of enough import to have acquired the title of „the minimum wage campaign issue.”

### ***3.2 Establishment of „work rules” and the expansion of the organization***

The labour market in the 1990s experienced diversification of employment practices. This was one of the results of a rapid increase in part-time employment compared to regular employment, as well as the expansion of dispatched workers and outworkers, as mentioned in Rengo White Paper in 1997 (Rengo 1997a: 68). In 1996 Rengo pointed out this trend of increasing „dual employment” (Rengo 1996: 16), identifying it as a cause of instability in the whole employment situation. Rengo felt obligated to combat further increases in dual employment.

One of the solutions was the establishment of „work rules.” Rengo proposed rule making that disallowed an employees replacement by part-time labour by turning jobs into *arubaito* [„a ‘side’ job taken by someone who is in school or who has regular employment elsewhere” (Houseman/Osawa 1995: 11)], and temporary work (Rengo 1996: 15). By the mid-1990s Rengo was agreeing to present these rules in a larger framework by making all employees abide by „Fair Work Rules” (Rengo 1997a: 24, 25). That Rengo included all employees in its scope when establishing work rules is a reflection of the grave situation occurring in Japan's labour market. Their proposal created an opening in the wall which had divided full-time workers and non-full-time workers up to that moment. This opening allowed full-time workers to become part-time workers, but not the other way around. This had the effect of increasing job mobility but lacked uniformity. A second trigger of this movement for equal treatment for part-time workers was the differences in working conditions across different em-

ployment types. These differences grew significantly, as part-time employment came to be an integral component of the internal labour market. Prior to this point the small number of part-time workers had marginalized the differing conditions. By making part-timers core workers of an industry the unions also generated the demands to provide part-timers the same benefits as full-time workers.

The next point to be examined is Rengo's emphasis on „action” in the late 1990s. This was apart from the demand on policy systems that Rengo had been emphasized throughout its existence. It was best symbolized by its slogan in October 1997: „21<sup>st</sup> Century: Power and Action”. (Rengo 1997b: 4-8). The background to this action is a sense of crisis for the mounting difficulties in maintaining the foundation of labour movement, especially in response to changes in the labour market. During this period, the labour market was characterized by an increase in part-time workers and a decrease in full-time workers. In legal circles a number of court decisions were made concerning wage discriminations against part-timers (see for example Yamada 1997). In Japan, labour problems confronting female part-time workers began to surface as individual disputes. As described earlier, generally part-time workers do not qualify as enterprise-based union members. This tends to make it difficult to put the working conditions of part-timers on Rengo's agendas for collective bargaining. Such being the case the irregular workers, typically part-timers, independently organized themselves and eventually established individual-based trade unions. These unions included such groups as the Woman's Union Tokyo (Kotani 1999) and so-called community unions (Takagi 2000). These unions elevated their *raison d'être* to coincide with the growing diversification of employment. By displaying their ability to achieve gains for their members these unions attracted much prestige.

These situations urged Rengo to re-examine its function as a national center, in particular its previous policies regarding unionization. While the number of union members constantly changes, an increase in the number of employees in the past several years, especially of part-time workers, coupled with a decline in full-time workers, has had an effect of reducing the rate of unionization. Rengo realized that there was a possibility that this phenomenon of increasing part-time workers would undermine the foundation of their organization. This is why Rengo is promoting organizing part-time workers through „Local Unions,” which are individual-based trade unions under Rengo.

Additional weakening of Rengo's structural foundation is related to the following two factors. One is that demands by unorganized workers are not represented by enterprise-based unions at the workplaces. Another thing is that the function of settling grievances that enterprise-based unions are expected to serve is not working effectively. This is the reason that Rengo took up this issue in particular and claimed that „improvement of grievance settlement will be a key to organizing workers” (Rengo 1998: 86). It is clear that the problems Rengo is facing are attributed to the structure of Japan's enterprise-based unions.

### ***3.3 Equal treatment in Rengo's policies for women***

In 1991, Rengo's women's department published „Action plans to promote women's participation in trade unions (tentative)” (Rengo/W 1991: 22-27). These plans were in accordance with the principles of action put in place at the time of Rengo's formation. The preliminary plans called for promotion of female workers' participation in trade unions, positive action toward the improvement of women's working conditions, and reform of male-dominated trade unions (Rengo/W 1991: 23). As a result of the examination of wage problems, women union members demanded the implementation and expansion of leave for childbirth, childcare, and nursing. They recognized that women's retirement and temporary leave from work due to pregnancy and childbirth contribute to wage disparities between male and female employees (Rengo/W 1991: 57-60). Rengo's women's department made policies in view of balancing work and family life. There was a shift in the labour market in response to an increase in female workers taking early retirement. Thus, Rengo perceived the necessity of dealing with issues concerning women workers from its foundation.

In the late 1990s Rengo accelerated its movement for the revision of Part-time Work Law (enacted in 1993) in Japan and the ratification of ILO's Part-time Work Convention (No. 175) in 1994. Japan's Part-time Work Law lists among its aims the guarantee of appropriate labour conditions for part-time employees and the improvement of employment management. Whether these goals will be achieved depends on the efforts of employers. The Law does not stipulate part-time workers' equal treatment with full-time workers. Because of this defect, the Law is familiarly called a „sieve law” in Japanese. A report on Rengo's part-time employment project by Rengo (Rengo/W 1997: 130-142) and the comments by the then general secretary of Rengo about the proposal on the re-examination of Part-time Work Law stressed the necessity of equal treatment for part-time workers, criticizing the discriminations against so-called „pseudo-part-time workers” (Rengo/W 1998: 136). Pseudo-part-time workers refers to employees who are part-time workers under an employment contract, but have the same working hours as full-time employees. This indicates the differences between full-time workers and part-time workers cannot simply be measured by working time. For academia, such differences are usually ascribed to the „status of employment” as part-time since part-time employees under an employment contract are subjected to disparities (Osawa 2001). Part-time work as a status of employment characteristic of Japan has gained importance which must be addressed in Rengo's employment policies.

As previously mentioned, the discussion by Rengo's women's department on part-time work not only took up the differences of working conditions, but also looked into the supply side of part-time work. Their efforts can be observed in the department's proposal to solve the problem in the taxation system. Part-time workers are forced to make certain employment adjustments to their working hours and wages, in order to be eligible for tax deduction and allowances (Rengo/W 1993: 15, 16). Rengo women's department sought to reform the wage and taxation systems based on so-called household units, which support such adjustments. They wanted to emphasize the necessity of „policy changes” enabling the compatibility between work and family



life for both men and women and to reconsider the „sexual division of labour known as ‘men outside, women at home’ ” (Rengo/W 1995: 11-17).

Such activities by the women’s department resulted in the introduction of „gender equality: the construction of gender-equal society” as one of Rengo’s perspectives towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century, pursuant in its union movement as a whole. This perspective defined the reassessment of existing sexual division of labour through the transition from the unit consisting of „a full-time worker (company man) and a full-time home-maker” to a social system of lifestyles and working styles which enable people to maintain both work (income) and family responsibilities (Rengo 1997a: 25). It also served as a possible ground for explaining factors inducing the supply of part-time labour and its low wages in Japanese employment.

#### **4. Germany’s case**

In the 1990s, Germany underwent two major changes which it had never experienced before. The first change was an integration of two different economic systems: the reunification of Germany in 1990 and the second the reunification of EU which took place throughout Europe. EU nations in the 1990s were gradually incorporated into the movement towards an integrated socio-economic system. Under the influence of German reunification and corporate globalization, the labour conditions in Germany in the 1990s were deteriorating.

##### **4.1 Part-time employment**

During the 1990s the ever-growing trend toward the feminization of employment increased the number of part-time workers who fall out from the scope of „typical employment relationship,” to be known as the „second-wave” boom in part-time labour.

From the early 1980s onwards, part-time employment had been discussed principally from the viewpoint of employment policy: the augmentations of employment through the promotion of part-time labour or through a mandatory transfer from full-time to part-time labour. Yet part-time work was understood as a form of work which „differs from the working hours laid down in collective agreements” (Killmann/Klein 1997: 81). This meant that despite a boost in part-time work, within the DGB, with the exception of DGB women’s department, people showed less interest in part-time labour with short working hours (Yuki 2001a). Accordingly, the DGB’s policy priorities were primarily concerned with the problems of workers under „typical employment relationship,” whereas the problems of „women” were shelved and even within the DGB the views of women’s department were hardly reflected in its policy for part-time labour, even if the agendas proposed by women’s department were adopted at the Federal Conventions (Yuki 2000).

Despite this, in the 1990s, even in Germany, a sign of change finally began to emerge as the success of „part-time economy” in the neighboring Netherlands was reported (Visser 1999). Simultaneously, the consensus to change the treatment of part-time labour was in the making by the government as well as between trade unions and employers’ associations. In early 1994, the government hammered out a „push for part-time work” in the hope of giving jobs to the unemployed by redistributing the existing amount of work through the promotion of part-time work. On November 8,

1994, DGB Executive Committee announced „the call for socially acceptable part-time labour ( Anforderungen an eine sozialverträgliche Teilzeitiinitiative )” (DGB 1994a). In this appellation the committee stressed the necessity of legal protection of part-time work and the regulation of the employment conditions for part-timers by collective agreements (DGB 1994a: 1). It presented measures for promoting part-time work that covered the respect for the autonomy in choosing part-time work and sought to narrow differences between full-time work and part-time work, and to ensure the guarantee of the right to return to work part-time (DGB 1994a: 3). The objectives of such changes in the DGB’s overall policy were to promote policies for part-time labour, including its protection, in order to „make work and family life compatible, to open up the possibility of creating individual working hours for both male and female workers, to expand employment opportunities for both male and female workers, and to partly contribute to the reduction of mass unemployment” (DGB/W 1997: 40). DGB women’s department evaluated the impact of this policy change, as follows: [From thereon] „part-time employment moved from the field of women’s issues to the center of the political debates as a measure of employment policy” (DGB/W 1997: 40).

After the mid-1990s, the DGB tried to undertake the problems of part-time employment on a full scale. The DGB sought the resolution of wage disparities between men and women, reexamined the collective bargaining policy in consideration of the exclusion of part-time employment from bargaining and applying social security, and sought to eliminate indirect discrimination in relation to court decisions at the European Court of Justice (DGB/W 1997: 23-25, 30, 31).

#### **4.2 Policy on collective working time**

As demonstrated in the „Five Strategies for the Expansion of Employment” in July 1994, at the outset of the 1990s, the cornerstone of the DGB’s employment policies was its measure to distribute labour by reducing working hours (DGB 1997a: 24). Because of this, policies on collective bargaining policy concerning job creation and job guarantees in particular came to have greater importance (DGB 1997a: 14, 33).

In the latter half of the 1990s the discussion about collective agreement related to collective working time centered on the topic of flexibility of working hours. In the late 1980s, in the course of countering the „flexibility strategy” by the government and employers’ associations, trade unions were already standing at a major turning point in their collective bargaining policy. From the 1990s on there was an unprecedented increase in flexibility derived from companies’ reforms of their personnel policies and reorganization of workplaces. The DGB began exploring the path to changing its collective bargaining policy on working time, so as to effect the time arrangement of flexible working hours (DGB 1997a: 83) .

In the mid-1990s, the DGB shifted to adopt a new working hour policy. This policy consisted of a type of job creation consummated by shorter working hours and flexibility under „time sovereignty”. In 1996, the DGB introduced a new concept into its policy on working time respecting workers’ time sovereignty (DGB 1996). Accounting for the fact that there are less workers working under the fixed „standard working hours” (DGB 1996: 14), the DGB set its direction to „create a socially ac-

ceptable policy on working time (*Arbeitszeiten sozialverträglich gestalten*)” (DGB 1996: 18). It positively interpreted a wider range of choice in matters of workers’ working hours, bringing time sovereignty to the fore so that workers can choose their working time out of their own volition rather than passively accepting the increased flexibility steered by companies. Now diverse types of workers working under diverse working hour systems were fully included in the scope of DGB’s policy targets.

The direction to promote „socially acceptable part-time work” now formed one of the pillars of the DGB’s new policy on working time addressing workers’ time sovereignty. In other words, the DGB was urged to „offer choices to workers wishing to work shorter hours” (DGB 1996: 20) apart from a choice of long working hours.

In policies addressing time sovereignty, the view of eradicating gender inequality between paid and unpaid work is essential. The true significance of the DGB’s policy lies in how the DGB approaches such a view toward gender. Accordingly, the DGB turns to „encourage men as well to work as part-timers,” whereas part-time work used to be „exclusively women’s concerns” because „a woman had no choice other than part-time work because of her family responsibilities” (DGB 1996: 22). The DGB „widened the possibilities for part-time labour and eliminated discriminations unique to part-time,” introduced it to the elderly and public servants as well, and „endeavored to improve the working condition and the image of part-time labour and in so doing made it more attractive to both men and women” (DGB 1997a: 100, 101). By expanding the target of its policies ranging over sex, age, and employment types, the DGB was attempting to overcome the traditional fixed image of part-time workers associated with women.

With novel perspectives to the effect that „gender equality should be better attained in establishing time sovereignty” and that elimination of gender inequality should be enforced in distributing working time considering both paid and unpaid work, the DGB sought to „call for men’s participation in family life to resolve the sexual division of labour” (DGB 1996: 39). In sum, the issues of part-time work including marginal part-time work were „no longer women-specific issues, nor were they treated as issues having secondary relevance” (DGB/W 1997: 31).

### **4.3 DGB and its gender policy**

Starting in the early 1990s there were diverse changes in social environments, namely changes in the composition of workers in the DGB with an increase in the number of white-collar and women workers. The DGB was aiming at the reform of the organization in search of new principles for future labour movement, in what is known as „the Reform Debate” (DGB 1994b: 23-29). The Debate was first triggered by high unemployment rates and mass restructuring which took place in the former East Germany. After the 1990s, the drop in the number of union members pushed forward this Debate (DGB 1999: 67).

With a rise in the percentage of women union members within the DGB, coupled with lobbying action by the DGB women’s department especially from the end of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s, women’s issues were increasingly seen as issues to be mainstreamed into the collective concern of the union. At the same time, the DGB reached an agreement to actively promote women’s status by increasing

women's participation in decision-making bodies within the organization. Women's issues were now in the consciousness of people within the DGB as something which must be addressed (DGB/W 1993: 60-64). In May 1992, through its slogan of „Women forward,” the DGB women's department pressed forward in the direction of actively dealing with gender equality in all fields collectively under the department's own initiative (DGB/W 1993: 5-7). In parallel with the ongoing discussion on the revision of the Basic Law involving German reunification, Germany was moving toward the „de facto enforcement of equal rights for women and men” (Art. 3 Para. 2 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany in September 1994) .

The DGB's „Reform Debate” developed into the successful revision of the Basic Programme in November 1996 (DGB 1997b). It became DGB's principle to „create future” corresponding to a drop in standard workers. In every part of the Basic Programme, the perspective of gender was incorporated. This indicated that gender equality policy now gained importance as the main issue that the organization must deal with (DGB/W 1997: 60). In the DGB's new future-oriented policies, because of the semantic change of „redistribution of labour,” „labour” was no longer limited to „paid work,” but also included „unpaid work” such as domestic chores, childcare, and nursing care within its scope. Accordingly, relevant discussions were based on this notion of „redistribution of labour” (DGB/W 2001: 25).

In the 1990s policy-makers within the DGB „changed their mind” to reinterpret „women's issues” as issues of the DGB as a whole, which was propelled by two major factors. One is the reunification of East and West Germany, the other the EU reunification.

Among them, the EU's gender policies had a significant impact. The EU had been taking the initiative in the promotion of gender equality by drawing up what were known as „Action Programmes.” In 1993, the reform of the EU's Structural Fund specified the realization of gender equality as a top priority issue (DGB 1997a: 55). Through the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 the concept of „gender mainstreaming” was introduced, reinforcing gender policy even more (DGB 2002: 21). Equal treatment between men and women in the area of employment was set forth as one of the central issues of the EU's various policies. With the upsurge of EU integration in Europe, Germany was attempting to transform itself into an EU member nation.

In the movement toward „Europeanization of collective bargaining policies” (DGB 1997a:35, 55) including the narrowing of women's wage gaps, DGB women's department took the lead to conduct full-scale research on the status quo from gender perspectives. They set one of the discussion issues the need to raise women's ratio in the committee for collective bargaining (DGB/W 1997:24).

From the mid-1990s onwards, the DGB has taken concrete measures to explore how it should incorporate collective bargaining policy into gender mainstreaming. The focus of the measures will be likely placed on how two different types of employment, full-time work and part-time work, should be treated within collective bargaining policy. The qualitative improvement of part-time work in Germany will rest on how far the individual trade unions, which have just set about tackling part-time work with vigor, can implement this very issue under the initiative of the DGB.

## 5. Analysis of the differences between Japan and Germany

In Japan the expansion of part-time workers in the 1990s compelled Rengo to organize them. This was both as a means to maintain Rengo's foundation as a trade union and to immediately implement existing policies of equal treatment so as to check the aggravation of working conditions. The expansion urged Rengo to review the previous wage and social security policies. The phenomenon offered an opportunity to fully translate the views of the Rengo's women's department into Rengo's mainstream movements and policies. This may indicate that women's issues are no longer to be undertaken by the women's department alone. In this sense, these recent policies by Rengo can be termed as the prologue to gender policies.

By comparison, in Germany, the DGB's departure during the 1990s from the rigorous image of „workers” founded on the past „typical employment relationship” was a great achievement. The DGB proceeded with its policy assuming the image of diverse workers to be the target of its collective bargaining policy. For instance, the DGB situated part-time employment as one of diverse employment types and in effect set it free from „women's issues,” upon which the DGB began to vigorously take measures for part-time employment. In the upsurge of EU integration, DGB's gender policies were indeed commenced by external forces. By the mid-1990s the framework enabling the DGB to take measures for part-time work from gender perspectives had been almost completed.

Japan and Germany share similarities in terms of part-time employment. In the midst of a 1990s recession there was a change in the labour market. This change took place in the form of part-time expansion. The expansion served to undermine the premises of labour movements by Rengo and the DGB and their policy to target regular employment and standard workers. This had a tremendous impact on Rengo and the DGB as the policies worked out under the initiative of each women's department came to influence the trade unions overall. By constructing the frameworks from gender perspectives, the two trade unions tried to reform not only the past structure of the unions, but also employment policy, equal treatment, and the notion of „labour.” The creation of frameworks from gender perspectives that took into account part-time workers was initiated in the late 1990s in Japan. Germany preceded Japan because it had already completed its new framework by the mid 1990s. Despite the time-frame differences, the process signified a transition from „women's policy” into „gender policy.”

In contrast, there are differences owing to the structural differences in trade unions in Japan and Germany. In Japan, part-timers had been excluded from union membership, which is the very requisite of the trade union movement. It is pointed out that unless the member qualifications which currently are limited to regular employment are revised, advancement of gendering is bound to be difficult. Collaboration within each unit labour union seems to be an important issue. In case of Germany, where unions are based on individual membership, member qualifications pose no structural problems.

The future of trade unions in both countries will be determined in part by how successful they are in furthering gender policies and concluding collective agreements

which include more attractive equal treatment. This requires that part-time workers have active participation in trade union movements in parallel with the reassessment of the principles of equal treatment based on time ratios and equal pay for equal work. This reassessment must present comprehensive gender policy which takes into account the re-evaluation of „labour,” including not only the sites of employment, but also the realm of unpaid work in conjunction with the field of social security encompassing workers' life. Since German trade unions adopt individual membership, in order to empower trade unions, they need to make the contents of their policy attractive enough to recruit part-timers. The DGB is already prepared to embark on reassessing collective agreements to formulate more appealing ones. In Japan immediate measures should be taken to move forward to stipulate gender policy as an integral part of collective agreements. In both Japan and Germany the key to success hinges on the national labour centers of both countries.

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